

THE GOSPEL CORDIAL

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*“Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.
Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.
Proverbs 31:6-7*

THESE somewhat singular sentences were spoken by the mother of Lemuel to her son, who was probably Solomon. She had already said to him, “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” But such a king as Solomon must have had an abundant store of wine of all kinds, so his mother urged him to give it to the sick and the sad and the poor who needed it more than he did.

The Jews were in the habit of giving a cup of strong drink, usually with some potent drug in it, to stupefy those who were about to be executed. Perhaps that is the meaning of the words, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish.” We know, too, how persons who have been very weak and ill, on the very borders of the grave, have often been medicinally relieved by wine given to them which they could not possibly purchase for themselves.

I believe this is the literal meaning of the text and that if any man should be wicked enough to draw from it the inference that he would be able to forget his misery and poverty by drinking—he would soon find himself woefully mistaken, for if he had one misery before, he would have ten miseries afterwards. And if he were previously poor, he would be in still greater poverty afterwards. Those who fly to the bottle for consolation might as soon fly to hell to find a heaven, and instead of helping them to forget their poverty, drunkenness would only sink them still more deeply in the mire.

I am going to use my text spiritually, for I believe it has a far deeper meaning than that which glistens upon its surface. There are many persons who are doubting and despairing, spiritually “ready to perish.” And there is, in the Word of God, a rich store of comforting truths which are far more cheering to the spirit than wine can ever be to the body. And we are to give this Gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart, that they may drink and forget their misery and remember their doubts and despair no more.

In attempting to obey the precept of the text, I am going to speak upon three topics. First, that *there is a most comforting cordial in the Gospel*. Secondly, *that it is our duty and privilege to give this cordial to all who need it*. And thirdly, *that when it is given to such people, it is their duty and privilege to drink it and forget their spiritual poverty and misery*.

I. So, first, THERE IS MOST COMFORTING CORDIAL IN THE GOSPEL. Dr. Watts truly sings,—

*“Salvation! Oh, the joyful sound!
'Tis pleasure to our ears;
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears.”*

I will take, first, the case of *a true believer in Jesus who is sorely tried with cares and losses and crosses*. I will suppose that you have come in here tonight dreading what may happen to you tomorrow. Perhaps your trouble, my brother, is that your business is failing and that want is staring you in the face.

Possibly you, my sister, are sorrowing over that dear child who lies in her little coffin in the quiet room upstairs at home. Or it may be that you, my friend, have a sick wife, and day by day you see fresh signs and tokens of the great loss that is surely awaiting you. I cannot mention all the causes of sad hearts in the believing members of this great assembly, but my Master has sent me here with His own blessed cordial, which is more than sufficient to comfort every sorrowing saint here.

Remember, beloved, that all that happens to you comes in the course of divine providence. Your loving heavenly Father has foreseen, foreknown, and I venture to say, foreordained it all. The medicine you have to drink is very bitter, but the unerring Physician measured all the ingredients drop by drop, and then mixed them in the very way in which they would best work for your highest good.

Nothing in this world happens by chance. That great God—who sits upon the circle of the heavens, to whom all things that He has made are but as the small dust of the balance, who make the clouds His chariot, and rides upon the wings of the wind—that same God cares for you with such special care that He has even numbered the very hairs of your head and put your tears in His bottle. You may, therefore, rest assured that even those experiences which are causing you so much sorrow are all in accordance with His eternal counsel and decree. Does not this divine cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Remember, too, that everything that happens to believers is working for their present and lasting good. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” If you could have chosen your own circumstances and condition in life, you could not have made so wise a choice as God has made for you.

The gardener knows where his plants will flourish best. Some of them might wish to grow in the sunshine, although like the fern family, they are better in the shade. Some of them would prefer to be on yonder mossy bank, but the gardener puts them in sandy soil because he knows that it is better suited to the requirements of their nature.

You may depend upon it that there never was any earthly father who was so attentive to the needs of his child as your heavenly Father is to yours. When you decide as to the occupation you think is best for your son to follow, you may select the very career that will prove to be his ruin—but when God plans your future, He takes more care in arranging for you than you do in arranging for your boy, and as He sees the end from the beginning—which you cannot see either for yourself or for your child—He chooses for you with infinite and unerring wisdom.

Do not wish to have it otherwise, dear brother or sister in Christ. Be not only content with such things as you have, but say with David, “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” So drink this divine cordial, and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more.

Moreover, beloved friend, do you not know that the Lord Jesus Christ is with you in all your poverty and misery? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego never realized the presence of the Son of God so blessedly until they were cast alive into Nebuchadnezzar’s burning fiery furnace. But His presence with them there was so manifest that even the heathen king exclaimed, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

There is many a child who has no special petting and fondling so long as it stays well—but as soon as it is ill, it seems as though all the mother’s love was concentrated upon that particular member of the family—and it is to you who especially need such a cheering message that the Lord says, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted.”

It was to His ancient people that He gave the gracious promise and it was concerning them that it was said, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” It is thus that He still tenderly and lovingly deals with His tried and afflicted people, and this thought ought to be like a cordial to make them forget their poverty and misery.

I might keep on all night trying thus to comfort tried saints, but I must content myself by giving them just one more sip of this divine cordial and that shall be this—remember how soon all these trials will be over. Be of good courage, weary pilgrim—the heavenly mansion where you are to rest forever is almost in sight, and you may well sing,—

*“My Father’s house on high,
Home of my soul! how near,
At times, to faith’s foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear!”*

How fast the years fly by and our trials and troubles are flying just as fast. Beloved, Paul truly wrote concerning “our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” for after all, our afflictions are only like a troubled dream—a little starting in the sleep of life and then we wake to sleep no more forever. This world is to the believer, like a country inn by the wayside where there are many constantly coming and going, and there are such disturbing noises that no one can rest. Well, never mind, you are only tarrying there for one short night, and then you shall be up and away to your eternal home, to go no more out forever. Will not this divine cordial make you forget your poverty and remember your misery no more?

Now I will take the case of *a true believer in Jesus who is suffering from soul-desertion*. You, my friend, are inclined to say with Heman the Ezrahite, “O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee!....Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps...LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou face from me?”

You are even inclined to think that you now can understand that cry of Christ upon the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The Lord seems to turn a deaf ear to your supplications, prayer itself is a heavy burden to you—you have no comforting visions of the Savior’s face—past seasons of holy enjoyment are only remembered by you with regret that you no longer have such happy experiences.

Even when you turn to the Word of God itself, your eye seems to fix only upon the threatenings and never to notice the many “exceeding great and precious promises.” And your soul is “ready to perish” in despair. Well, my poor brother, if there ever was a time when you needed the spiced wine of God’s covenant faithfulness and the luscious, nutritious nectar of Jesus Christ’s everlasting love, it is now.

I wonder what Arminians do when they are seized with this kind of spiritual ague and shake in terror from head to foot? I know that when I have these attacks—and I do have them very badly sometimes—I turn to those texts that say most about God’s free and sovereign grace, and I try to get the marrow and fatness out of them to feed my starving soul.

Those who, spiritually, “do business in great waters,” find that nothing will serve their turn but God’s eternal decrees, God’s unchanging purposes, God’s never-failing faithfulness, God’s distinguishing, discriminating grace. At least that is my own experience and I urge you, my despairing brother or sister, to take a deep draught of the same divine cordial so that you may forget your spiritual poverty and remember your misery no more. You are not likely to turn the high doctrines of the Gospel to evil account, so come and feed upon them till your soul is satiated with these dainties of your Lord’s banqueting house. Accept His own gracious invitation, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

Among the other comforting things that I should say to a brother suffering from soul-desertion would be this—Remember, brother, if you ever were a child of God, you are a child of God now. You pass through many changes, but you have a Savior who is ever the same—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” You have your ups and downs, you change with every phase of the moon. But with the great “Father of lights” there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We rightly sing,—

*“Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame;*

*His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many change goes,
His love no variation knows."*

He never began a work of grace in anyone and then left it unfinished. He never adopted a child into His family and then cast him out to perish. The Lord Jesus Christ never first married any soul and then divorced her, for He hates putting away. He will never part with any member of His mystical body. If He could do such an outrageous thing, He would Himself be incomplete.

So, my despairing brother, I say to you that if you have ever had the light and the love of God in your soul, not only are you still a saved man, but the time will yet come when you will know that it is so. Like Jonah, you will yet come up out of the depths and with him you will ascribe all the glory of your salvation unto the Lord.

I also want to try to comfort *some true believers in Jesus who are afraid they are not really the Lord's*. I am glad that John Bunyan mentioned some of their names in his immortal allegory, for we still have among us swarms of people who answer to his description of Mr. Fearing, Mr. Feeble-mind, Mr. Despondency and his daughter, Miss Much-afraid, Mr. Ready-to-halt and Mr. Little-faith, though we have only here and there a Mr. Great-heart, or a Mr. Stand-fast, or a Mr. Valiant-for-Truth.

Well, dear friends, if you are here tonight, let me remind you that, although you are the little ones in God's family, you are not little in God's sight. He loves you just as much as He loves the greatest saint who ever lived.

When the Lord gave the commandment to Moses concerning the ransom for every soul numbered among the children of Israel, it was expressly stated, "The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." It is the same in the atonement wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ—it cost Him just as much, and no more, to ransom the least of His people or the greatest—and He loves them equally. He may use some of them as His instruments more than He uses others, but He has the same regard for all of them. If He ever makes any difference in His treatment of them, it is the weak ones who have the preference—He carries the lambs in His bosom, but He allows the strong sheep to follow in His track.

So be of good comfort, you feeble folk who belong to Christ, and remember also that little saints are just as safe as big saints. If we are with Christ in the vessel of His church, we are just as safe as all the rest of those on board—and we may rest assured that we shall never perish, for if we could, Christ would perish too, and that can never be.

The greatest saint, who ever served his Lord with apostolic zeal or even Christlike self-sacrifice, has to rely for his salvation on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—and the feeblest saint has to do just the same—and the one is no more saved and safe than is the other. So Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-afraid, drink that divine cordial and be no longer either doubtful or sad.

I think my text also has a special message to *the sinner who is heavy of heart and desponding in spirit*. To such a one I would present the Gospel cordial thus. My friend, remember that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That word "sinners" includes you. And if you ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I answer as Paul did when that question was put to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

So, as you are commanded to believe on Christ, to rely upon Him, to trust to Him to save you, it cannot be presumptuous on your part to do so. Jesus Christ is "mighty to save." He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. If there is a sinner here who is so bad that I could not describe his case to you, he is not too bad for Christ to save.

Then why do you despair, O you who are "ready to perish," seeing that God has given up His well-beloved Son to die for just such sinners as you are? Your sins are great, I know, and they cry aloud for

punishment—but the moment that you repent of them and trust in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from them—you shall be made perfectly whole.

Your sins shall be so completely put away that God says that, if they are searched for, they shall not be found, yea, they shall not be. They shall be as absolutely annihilated as if you had never committed them. What more comforting cordial than that can you possibly have set before you? Then drink of it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more.

II. I can only speak very briefly upon the second point, which is, that **IT IS OUR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO GIVE THIS CORDIAL TO ALL WHO NEED IT.**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I want you all to obey the injunction of the text by giving this Gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart and “ready to perish.” Some of you can do this *by talking to them of your own experience*. When you meet with doubting and desponding souls, tell them how the Lord delivered you from old Giant Despair’s grim dungeon in Doubting Castle. Remind them of that key called Promise which can unlock the doors of the prison where they lie bound in fetters of iron.

We are told that Origen, so long as his strength permitted, used to go to the prisons where the Christians were confined during the Decian persecution and afterwards went with them to the stake, comforting them from the Scriptures which he had found to be such a support to his own soul. Imitate him as far as you can, even though Christians are not now persecuted unto death.

Many of you can give away this Gospel cordial *by visiting the sick and the poor*. In so vast a church as this, it is impossible for the pastor or elders to visit all the members, much less can they visit all who compose our great congregation. So I would urge you to do the visiting yourselves as far as you are able. Especially would I invite you who are the most deeply experienced in the things of God to find out the sick and the sorrowing in your own neighborhoods and to comfort them with the comfort wherewith you, yourselves, have been comforted of God.

Then, many more of you than are at present doing it can give away this Gospel cordial *by preaching wherever and whenever you have the opportunity*. In such a city as London, where every street corner can furnish a pulpit and every street can supply a congregation, there is no excuse for the man with only one talent if he does not use it for Christ. The good news you have to tell, my brother, is so sweet that it should be told over and over and over again till every gale shall spread the tidings to—

“All people that on earth do dwell.”

I pray the Lord also to raise up many brethren and sisters from our midst to go to “the regions beyond” as missionaries of the cross, and to move you, who cannot preach, to give of your substance either for the training of our brethren in the College, or for the support of those who are called of God to preach and teach the Word in distant lands where Jesus is not known. In that way, you too will be helping to give the Gospel cordial to those who are heavy of heart and “ready to perish.”

III. Now lastly, and but briefly, **WHEN THIS GOSPEL CORDIAL IS GIVEN TO SUCH PEOPLE, IT IS THEIR DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO DRINK IT**, and forget their spiritual poverty and remember their misery no more.

We can bring a horse to the water, but we cannot make him drink it. And we can carry this Gospel cordial to the sinner, but only the Holy Spirit can sweetly constrain him to take a full, deep draught of it. I have been trying to give this cordial again tonight to those who need it, as indeed I have been doing ever since the Lord first opened my mouth to speak for Him.

But what about your part of the business, my dear hearers? It is my duty and privilege to preach the Gospel, but it is just as much your duty and privilege to believe it when it is preached. “Faith cometh by hearing,” but alas! there are many who hear the Word, who are like those of whom the apostle wrote that “the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

To have the healing medicine in your hand, and yet not to drink it, is to commit spiritual suicide. I beseech you, sinner, not to add that crowning crime to all your other iniquities. I pray you, this very

hour, to accept the proffered boon. The water of life is set before you—drink and live. The bread of life is placed within your reach—why should your immortal soul be starved and perish?

Do you fear that you are too black a sinner to be saved? Remember Agur's words concerning one of the "four things which are little upon the earth," but which "are exceeding wise." He said, "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." It may be that Agur had seen a big black spider in Solomon's palace, and that, as he mused upon it, he said to himself, "That ugly creature is very wise, for there was a great storm coming on, and her usual home would have been unsafe. So, looking about for a place of shelter, she espied an open window in the king's palace and in she went. She had no right there—no one had invited her—but there she was."

Now, poor sinner, that spider was not as full of venom as you are full of sin. There is a greater storm coming on than that spider dreaded—and the door of God's mercy is as surely open as was that window in Solomon's palace. And you are invited to enter, as that spider never was invited. O sinner, be at least as wise as a spider and come in to God's royal palace of salvation. For once you are inside, you shall never be cast out!

Are you still afraid to come to Jesus? Then let me remind you of that poor woman who came and touched the hem of His garment, and was instantly cured of her long-standing malady. You remember that she was ceremonially unclean—she had no business to be in a crowd—yet she was so eager to be healed that she worked her way through the throng until she was near enough to Jesus to touch the border of His seamless robe, for she said, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole."

She did so, and Christ at once honored her faith, and gave her the gracious assurance that she might "go in peace"—and keep the cure that she had, as it were, obtained by stealth. O sinner, will you not be as wise as that poor woman was? You need not attempt to steal the blessing, for you are invited to come and take it openly.

Jesus still says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is what you need—rest of mind, rest of heart, rest of conscience—that rest can only come to you by faith, "for we who have believed do enter into rest."

O you poverty-stricken and miserable sinners, believe in Jesus. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for so shall you find rest unto your souls. And then shall you also realize that "there remaineth" another rest—a fuller and yet more blessed one—even that eternal "keeping of Sabbath" which is the blissful portion of all "the people of God."

There is the divine cordial which we are commanded to place within your reach. Drink it and forget your poverty and remember your misery no more. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 11:1-44

Verse 1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

To many people, it may have seemed an event of no particular importance that "a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany," but great consequences often depend upon what appear to us to be very minor matters, and we must not despise the least of the Lord's people, nor think little of anything that concerns them.

When a king or an emperor is ill, the news is published in all the papers, but when a friend of the Lord Jesus, a man "named Lazarus of Bethany" was sick, that event was recorded in the Bible because of something very remarkable which was to follow that sickness. Lazarus was a son of God, and grace makes greater distinctions than earthly rank and worldly honors ever can make.

2-3. *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* [See Sermon #1518, Beloved, Yet Afflicted]

So you see that those whom Jesus loves may be themselves ill, or may have dear ones who are ill. Ay, and the illness may be sent by God as a token and testimony of His affection for them. Men polish gems, but they do not take the trouble to polish common pebbles—and God sends affliction to His own beloved ones for their good and for His glory.

4. *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death,*

That was not to be the end of it. God had quite another purpose in view in allowing Lazarus to be sick. “This sickness is not unto death,”

4. *But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Jesus knew that Lazarus would die, but He also knew that his death would only be a kind of interlude—the great design of God was not to take Lazarus home at that time, but to glorify His Son in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.*

Happy was the family at Bethany of which it could be said that all the members of it were dear to Christ. Is it so with your household, Martha? Or is it only Mary who is thus loved? Has Lazarus been left out? Then pray for your brother as these gracious sisters sent to tell Jesus about Lazarus.

6. *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

We cannot always understand what our Master does. It seemed a strange thing that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stopped where He was. Yet there was a good reason for the delay—Christ was waiting in wisdom and in love. I think I see Mary and Martha, day after day, wondering where Jesus could be. Perhaps even thinking hard thoughts of Him and saying, “He loved us, and He loved our brother—why did He not come as soon as we sent for Him?”

7-10. *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

Christ felt that His day was not over and that He could not die before His work was done, and therefore, He did not fear the stones cast by unbelieving foes. So, my brother, at all risks go on with your God-given work. You will live through your twelve hours and you will not live a moment longer. Be so much a believer in predestination that, even if duty calls you to risk your life, you will bravely do it, knowing that you are in the hands of God and that your life cannot end until your appointed twelve hours have expired.

11. *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;*

“Our friend?” Why, Lazarus was Christ’s friend—yes, but those who are Christ’s friends are our friends too, if we belong to Christ. I have recently met with a large number of persons from different countries, but the moment we discovered that we loved the same Lord, we seemed to be as intimate as if we had been next-door neighbors for the last fifty years. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;”

11-14. *But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

Let me remind you, my dear brothers who preach the Gospel, that you will have to preach very plainly—for you see that even the apostles could not understand a figure of speech. When Christ said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” they mistook His meaning, so He had to say plainly, “Lazarus is dead.” That is how we must preach the Gospel—not only so that our hearers can understand it, but so that they cannot misunderstand it.

15-16. *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

Thomas always took a dark view of things, so he thought his Master was going to be killed. But he was a brave disciple, for he said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” There are still many very timid despondent disciples, but they cling to Christ and if necessary, they would die for Him, as Thomas was willing to die with Him. God bless you, Thomas! There are worse men than you, but not many better.

17. *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

You know that in the East, they have to bury the dead almost immediately because of the heat of the climate—so that Lazarus was, not long after he was dead, put away in the family vault.

18. *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:*

An easy walk of somewhere about two miles.

19-20. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.*

You will often hear people praising Mary at the expense of Martha, but although Mary is commended for sitting at Christ’s feet, Martha, here, was the first to meet her Lord. The varying characters of different persons come out best at different times. Mary is best at sermon time—she forgets the cups and the platters. But Martha is the more practical in the time of grief. She is active and does not give way as Mary does. She is not so contemplative and not so crushed as Mary is, so she is the first to go to meet her Lord.

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

There seems to have been just a tinge of reproach in Martha’s words—and Mary said exactly the same words to their dear Master and Friend a little later. And I have often heard Martha and Mary talk in this fashion—“Oh, if we had only had another doctor!” or, “If our dear friend had not gone to the seaside,” or, possibly, “If he had gone to the seaside, he might not have died.”

Well now, beloved friends, you have grief enough in having lost your relative or friend without adding to it by these unwise suppositions about what might have happened if you had done something else. Do not fall into that mistake, and wound yourselves and grieve your best Friend by unnecessary and useless regrets.

22-24. *But I know that even now* [See Sermon #2249, Even Now], *whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus said unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

She could not believe the joyful meaning that Christ meant to convey to her when He said, “Thy brother shall rise again.”

25. *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection,*

Note that our Lord did not say, “I am He who raises the dead,” but “*I am the resurrection,*”

25-27. *And the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead,* [See Sermon #1799, “Though He Were Dead”] *yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

Will not many of you make Martha’s grand confession of faith your own? Believe in Jesus and then you will be able to believe anything and everything that He says.

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* [See Sermon #1198, The Master]

Martha’s title for Christ might be rendered, “The Teacher, The authoritative Teacher,” yet I am glad our translators put it, “The Master.”

29. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him.*

The coming of Christ had such an effect upon her that she arose from amid the ashes of her sorrow and went out to meet her dear Lord and Master.

30-31. *Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*

It is significant that these mourners did not follow Martha when she went to meet Jesus—but they did follow Mary. Sometimes, sinners, who are not converted by listening to one preacher, are blessed by the testimony of two. One sister may not be able to lead her brother to Christ, yet God may enable two to do it. Jesus sent out His seventy disciples, “two and two,” and the apostles are usually mentioned in pairs—Simon and Andrew, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew and so on—and we shall find that two Christians can often accomplish what one alone could not do.

32-33. *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

His heart was full of sympathy. He felt the grief of these mourners and sorrowed with them.

34-35. *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.* [See Sermon #2091, “Jesus Wept”]

In the original, a very blessed and expressive word is used here concerning Christ’s weeping—quite a different word from that used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. It should be a constant comfort to the sorrowing church of God that “Jesus wept.”

36-39. *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! [See Sermon #3228, “Oh, How He Loves”] And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

“Will you expose that corrupt corpse to the air? “Ah, me! what poor foul creatures we are through the Fall! See what we may, any of us, become in a few days, so that even the one who loves us best will have to say of us, “Bury my dead out of my sight.”

40-41. *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

That groaning in spirit was Christ’s prayer to His Father, that inward tumult of His soul was His earnest supplication. And now He thanks His Father that He has heard Him. Yet Lazarus was still dead and lying—a mass of corruption—in the grave. Oh, for faith to bless God for the mercies that are on the way to us!

42-44. *And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.* [See Sermons #1052, The Sphere of Instrumentality; Sermon #1776, Unbinding Lazarus and #2554, The Spiritual Resurrection]

See what wonders our Lord can work and ask Him to work similar miracles in the spiritual realm—to raise to life those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.